

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 IO-13 /069 W

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P 130934Z JUN 77

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4452

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 4892

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT KS

SUBJ: BY-ELECTION SHOWS VOTER SUPPORT FOR STRONG NATIONAL
SECURITY POSTURE BUT SYMPATHY FOR CHONG IL-HYONG

SUMMARY: BY ELECTION TOOK PLACE IN RELATIVELY
FREE ATMOSPHERE, WAS WELL COVERED BY PRESS AND VOTER TURN
OUT WAS SURPRISINGLY HEAVY. TWO BEST KNOWN CANDIDATES WON,
ALTHOUGH O CHE-TO VICTORY SURPRISED PUNDITS. LARGE VOTE
FOR O CHE-TO SHOWS PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR STRONG NATIONAL
SECURITY POSTURE, BUT CHONG TAE-CHAL'S TALLY SHOWS SIGNIFICANT
SYMPATHY FOR HIS FATHER, MYONGDONG FIGURE AND FORMER
INCUMBENT CHONG IL-HYONG. END SUMMARY

1. BY-ELECTION ATMOSPHERE WAS RELATIVELY FRE, AND PRESS
COMMENT INCLUDING EDITORIAL REACTION HAS ALSO BEEN FAIRLY
OPEN. SOME CANDIDATES WERE OUTSPOKEN ENOUGH OVERGE ON
VIOLATION OF EM-9. REPRESENTATIVES OF MAJOR PARTIES, WHO
DID NOT ENGAGE IN "POLITICKING" DURING CAMPAIG, AS WELL
AS OTHER OBSERVERS HAVE NOT CLAIMED RIGGING OR OTHER
IRREGULARITIES ON ROKG PART, ALTHOUGH NDP HAS CONTINUED
ITS CRITICISM THAT ABSENCE OF QUALIFIED (READ OPPOSITION)
POLL WATCHERS INCONSISTENT WITH "KOREAN DEMOCRACY."

2. THE TWO BEST KNOWN CANDIDATES TURNED OUT TO BE
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SUCCESSFUL. O CHE-TO, WHO WAS NOT PRE-ELECTION FAVORITE
BUT RECEIVED THE LARGEST NUMBER OF VOTES, IS WELL-KNOWN
ANTI-COMMUNIST WHO BUILT UP REPUTATION AS ACTIVE PROSECUTOR
OF NORTH KOREAN SPY CASES. HE IS ALSO KNOWN AS HERO OF
ANTI-COMMUNIST RADIO DRAMA SERIES. HIS VICTORY SHOWED
KOREAN PUBLIC STILL VALUES ALERT, STRONG POSTURE AGAINST
NORTH, A LINE CONSISTENT WITH PRESIDENT PAK'S VIEW OF

NATIONAL PRIORITIES, AND CURRENT ROK SECURITY CONCERNS.

3. CHONG TAE-CHAL ALSO WON BUT HIS VOTE TOTAL WAS SIGNIFICANTLY BELOW O'S. CHONG'S VOTE WAS INTERPRETED BY MANY AS SUPPORT FOR HIS FATHER, CHONG IL-HYONG, A PROMINENT EIGHT-TIME VICTOR IN ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS (A RECORD), AND THE HEAD OF AN EFFECTIVE POLITICAL MACHINE IN THIS DISTRICT. CHONG TAE-CHAL MAY NOT HAVE DONE AS WELL AS HIS FATHER AND HIS FATHER'S MACHINE MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED TO DO, BUT HIS YOUTH (34 YEARS) MAY HAVE HURT HIM.

4. SINCE PARTIES DID NOT RUN, RELATIONS OF CANDIDATES TO GOVT OR OPPOSITION A MATTER OF EDUCATED GUESS. MOST OBSERVERS CONSIDER THAT PRO-GOVT CANDIDATES OUTPOLLED OPPOSITION CANDIDATES 51,240 TO 31,871. IN 1973 ELECTIONS NDP'S CHONG IL-HYONG RAN AWAY WITH LEAD. REVERSAL IN GOVT'S FAVOR MAY BE DUE TO INCREASED VALIDITY OF SECURITY THEME IN THIS ELECTION, CHONG'S YOUTH, OR TARNISHED OPPOSITION IMAGE (ALTHOUGH CHONG NOT OFFICIAL NDP CANDIDATE).

5. SEATS IN ASSEMBLY ARE NOW DISTRIBUTED AS FOLLOWS:
YUCHONGHOE - 73; DRP - 68; NDP - 55; INDEPENDENTS - 18,
SEATS UNFILLED - 5.

6. OUR ONLY OTHER COMMENT IS THAT SUBSTANTIAL TURNOUT PROVED KOREANS STILL DESIRE TO EXPRESS THEIR OPINION THROUGH BALLOT, DESPITE ABSENCE OF MAJOR PARTY CANDIDATES. THIS THEME HAS BEEN FEATURED IN LOCAL PRESS REPORTING ON ELECTION.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Concepts: ELECTIONS, ELECTION CANDIDATES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 13-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Disposition Remarks:
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Handling Restrictions: n/a
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